

TE - We must put an
end to it state - DoD message
not leaving W.H. demands.
Will you take steps.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

November 17, 1969

FROM: Harold H. Saunders

SUBJECT: Instructions on Wheelus Base

You should be aware of how the instructions to Ambassador Palmer on his reply to the Libyan note about Wheelus are being handled.

Secretaries Rogers and Laird have cleared a note to the Libyans and instructions to Palmer incorporating the following points:

- The US is prepared to begin talks about December 15 on withdrawal of US military facilities from Libya.
- The US trusts training can resume in the interim.
- If asked, Palmer is authorized to say that the talks could cover the possibility of our evacuating the base before termination of the agreement (December 1972).

They decided that they did not need to clear this position with the President. Having lost my argument with Newsom that it made sense to check this with the President in view of his interest in our general posture, I asked that they send over an information memo explaining their position.

In substance, I do not see much problem in the position that they have taken. In fact, Palmer will go in with this line, receive a curt response and be back with a recommendation to drop the effort to resume training and perhaps to begin talks before December 15. The substantive issue is whether we have a fight with the Libyans over this or whether we bow to the inevitable gracefully.

You are the judge of whether the bureaucratic principle involved here is a matter of concern. The Secretaries have in effect assumed that we are out of the base and that the only questions to be decided now are the tactics of negotiating an orderly withdrawal. They have decided that they do not need to bother the President with these operational questions. I do not quarrel with the judgment about the base; the only question is whether you feel the President is sufficiently reconciled to the situation that he will not be taken aback by the Secretaries' decision.